



A
• L E T T E R
From a Gentleman in the Country
T O A
Member of Parliament in *England*.

S I R,



Think we have been Friends and Acquaintance for about thirty Years, and as I have sat with you for some time in Parliament, have constantly given you my Interest in this County, and am pretty nearly related to you by my Wife, I cannot think of any Person who is more likely to pity the deplorable Circumstances to which I am at present reduced.

My Story is this.

You know very well that I have, for some Years past, retired from the busy Part of the World, laid aside all Thoughts of Parties and Politicks, and contented myself to live in the Country with my Wife and Children, upon that Estate which has been in my Family for many Generations,

and which, by my own Improvements, I have brought from Fifteen hundred Pounds *per Annum* to Two thousand.

It was the 8th of last *June* in the Evening, a Day so fatal that I shall never forget it as long as I live; when I was sitting with my Wife in the new Summer-house, (which you know I have lately built at the upper End of the Canal in my Garden) our four youngest Children were playing about us, and diverting us with those little wanton Tricks, which are natural to Youth and Innocence, when my eldest Boy (who was Fourteen last *August*) came running to us with a great deal of Joy in his Looks, and told me that Mr. S. was just alighted at the Gate. My Boy had scarce deliver'd his Message when I saw Mr. S. at the lower End of the Garden. I went to meet him, and receiv'd him with that Cheerfulness I endeavour to shew to all my Friends, and was somewhat pleased to think I should hear what was doing at *London*; from whence I presumed he came. Mr. S. told me, That he hoped I would pardon the Liberty he designed to take of being my Guest for one Night; and that he was to be the next Day at ——— upon some particular Business. I had but just Time to take a Turn with him round the Garden, and enquire after two or three of our common Acquaintance, when one of my Servants came to tell us that Supper was upon the Table. During Supper, among other Discourse, my Wife happened to tell Mr. S. that she heard every body was get-

getting an Estate in *London*, and by the *South-Sea*; and that she hop'd he had been a fortunate Man: Mr. S. upon this shrugged up his Shoulders, and told her, That to his great Misfortune he had but a little Money to lay out, and consequently had only got such a Trifle as was scarce worth mentioning. Upon my Wife's asking him, If she might presume to enquire how much. Mr. S. told her, That the utmost Farthing he had got yet, would but barely amount to Fifty thousand Pounds clear Gains. My Wife immediately gave a Look, which sufficiently shewed her Surprise, to hear such a Sum call'd a Trifle; and as I could not help shewing some Signs of Amazement at the same Time. Mr. S. told us, That he believed he could guess at our Thoughts by our Looks: but that if we knew what vast Fortunes other People had acquired, and how certain a Gain there was for everybody who had but Money to lay out, we should not be at all surprized to hear him talk as he did: He proceeded with giving us Instances of several People who had got Five or six hundred thousand Pounds, and even a Million of Money; concluding again with bewailing his own Unhappiness, that he had not more Money to lay out at a Time when so certain and considerable a Profit might be made. Our Discourse fell from this to several other Subjects, while Supper lasted, till it was time to go to Bed, I waited upon Mr. S. to his Chamber, where, upon my asking him, if we should not drink one Bottle of Wine, Hand to Fist, he was pleased to assent to the Proposition, provided I would not keep him up too late. When our Bottle was about half out, Mr. S. who seemed to have his Heart a little opened by the Wine, and to be affected with several obliging Things I had said to him, took me by the Hand, and giving me an hearty Squeeze, told me, That he had long had a very great Esteem for me, and had often thought that no Man in *England* better deserv'd a noble Fortune than myself, because nobody had a better Heart to make use of it. I reply'd, That I had never been ambitious, and thanked God I was very well contented with what I had. Mr. S. answered, That my eldest Son seem'd to promise he would one Day be as fine a Gentleman as any in *Great Britain*; that he had observ'd I had a large Family, and that it could do me no Harm to make an handsome Provision for my younger Children; that if I would but act with my usual Prudence, in an Affair he would communicate to me, he would let me into a Secret, by which I might infallibly double my Fortune within three Months. I must confess his Discourse rais'd my Attention; which Mr. S. observing, told me, That he had certain Intelligence, which he could depend upon, that there was a Third Subscription for the *South-Sea Company*, to be taken in at 1000 per Cent. That it was true, the said Subscription was already filled with the Chosen Friends of the Directors, and the Ministry, so that he could not pretend to say he could get me into it: but that it was as demonstrable as any Proposition in *Euclid*: That in consequence of this Subscription, the Stock would be immediately worth 1000 per Cent. And that after the next Subscription, which was to be at 1200, the said Stock would as infallibly be 1500. But that if I laid hold of the present Opportunity, before more Money came over from *Holland*, I might buy Stock at 750; which, as he had shewn me, would demonstrably double my Money in three Months. I thanked him for what he was pleased to communicate to me; but at the same time told him, That if I had an Inclination to follow his Advice, I had no Money by me. At this Answer he remained silent for some time, and seeming to be under a great deal of Concern, told me at last, That he had so much Friendship for me, that he was resolv'd I should not, however, lose this golden Opportunity; and that he believ'd he had a particular Friend in *London*, who upon his Recommendation, would accommodate me with Money upon a Mortgage of my Estate. To make short of my Story, Mr. S. so thoroughly convinced me that I must infallibly double the Money I took up, in three Months Time; and my Wife, whom I consulted on this Occasion, was so much of the same Opinion, that I agreed to go with him to *London*, when he return'd thither: He accordingly call'd upon me two Days after; and when we came to Town, recommended me so effectually to Mr. H. that that Gentleman did me the Favour to supply me with Thirty Thousand Pounds upon a Mortgage of my Estate. I laid out this Money in Stock at 750; and my good Friend Mr. S. assur'd me, he procur'd it for me considerably under the Market Price. He told me from Day to Day, that I had now made a very noble Provision for my Family, and might give my youngest Son a better Fortune than my eldest was born to. At the same Time, he took Care constantly

stantly to inculcate to me this Maxim, that I should not part with one Farthing of the Stock I had bought, but should, if possible, buy more, though I pawn'd my very Coat for it. As I had resign'd myself up entirely to Mr. S's Management, I follow'd his Advice in every Particular; and to my great Misfortune, found my Reputation and Credit were so good in Town, that tho' I had no more ready Money to lay out, four several Persons contracted to deliver me One thousand Pounds each, Capital Stock, on several Days in *October* and *December* last. I need not acquaint you with the dismal Turn the Affairs of the *South Sea Company* took soon after; that at the Opening of the Books in *August*, when it was generally expected our Stock would have been at 1200*l.* it fell to 800*l.* after which fatal Period it constantly declin'd. I thought, and was told, that it could not be advisable to sell upon a falling Market, and that Things would very soon change for the better; till at last, one of my Contracts for Time expiring, and the Person I had contracted with, insisting, that I should either take in the Stock or pay the Difference, I began to awake out of my golden Dreams. To preserve my Credit in the Alley, which I had learn'd a Man was never to forfeit, I was obliged to sell the Stock I had bought for ready Money, to pay the Difference of my Bargain for Time; and if you have never Stockjobb'd yourself, it is impossible to express to you to what deplorable Circumstances I found myself on a sudden reduced: For at the same Time that Demands came upon me, the Fortune which I thought myself in possession of, and out of which I was to satisfy these Demands, shrunk into nothing.

I have told you already, that when I first came to Town, I laid out *Thirty Thousand Pounds* in Stock at 750, so that I had *Four Thousand Pounds Capital Stock*; after which, I contracted for *Four thousand Pounds* more at 1000*l. per Cent.* which I was told, I might very well do without the least Danger of wading out of my Depth. My first Contract for Time expir'd on the 5th of *October*, and as Stock then sold in the Alley but at 120 *per Cent.* the Difference upon my said Contract amounted to *Eight Thousand eight hundred Pounds*; to answer which, after having sold my *Whole four Thousand Capital Stock*, which cost me originally *Thirty thousand Pounds*, for *Four thousand eight hundred Pounds*; I was obliged to give my Bond over and above, for the Remainder of the Difference, amounting to the Sum of *Four thousand Pounds*. I had nothing now left to hope for, but that the Stock would rise as fast as it had fallen, and that I might still be a Gainer on my three Bargains depending, but, alas, these were vain Hopes! When my next Contract expir'd, I found my self, not only undone, but involv'd in such a Debt as I could never hope to pay. I confess, to you, I was more than once under a Temptation to have put an End to my Misfortunes with my Life. My Wife sent me up Letters every Post, in all which, the poor Woman took it for granted that I had doubled my Fortune, and was even contriving how to lay out some of our Gains upon the Embellishing of our House and Gardens. I could not find in my Heart to answer one of her Letters, till at last frighten'd by my Silence, she came up to Town herself. My Heart is too big with Grief to describe to you our first Interview. The Day after she came to Town, one of my Creditors, to whom I could not pay the Difference of our Bargain, took out a Writ against me. Some People, who, I once thought my Friends, refused to be my Bail for so large a Sum, so that my Wife was contented to give up her Joynture, the only Thing we had left to prevent my lying in a Goal, where I should have been now, notwithstanding her Kindness, if she had not hurry'd me into the Country by Force. I write this to you from a Place, which was once my House, but is now my Prison, being confin'd to one Room of it, to avoid the Pursuit of Bailiffs, who have been discover'd, more than once, lurking under my Windows. I am told that the Equity of Redemption to my Estate will be foreclosed next Term; and the Person to whom I Mortgaged my Estate, has already had the Assurance to send down a Surveyor, and a Master Builder, to see what Additions can be made in the House, which, it seems is not large enough for him. I have lately discover'd that this very Man was the Person who sold me his own Stock by a third Hand, for all the Money I borrow'd of him: That he had some Months before, taken a Fancy to my Estate, and that my pretended Friend Mr. S who constantly avoided me for some Time before I left London, was sent into the Country, on Purpose to decoy me up.

I have given you my unhappy Story. I have not only lost all I had, but have still Demands upon me for *above Twenty thousand Pounds*. Where will my Misfortunes End! My poor Wife, whom I upbraid myself with having ruined, is for her own Part, half distracted, to think, that what I did was partly by her Advice, and is in Tears from Morning till Night. My youngest Children hang about their Mother; my eldest Son keeps me Company; the poor Boy had the good Nature to tell me, this Morning, that if I would but put him Apprentice to some honest Trade, he would endeavour, at least, to Support the Family. Alas! the poor Child doth not know the Depth of his Father's Misfortunes: And I may say, without Vanity, that the Boy deserves a better Fate, than he is now like to meet with. My two Girls have been thought Pretty; what must they come too? Heaven grant me Patience! My Servants, whom I am neither in a Condition to keep, or discharge, go up and down the House like so many living Statues; for, I may say, I was belov'd in my Family. I am pitied by all who knew me, but find no Assistance; and am told, several Gentlemen, my Neighbours, are almost in the same Circumstances.

Dear Sir, as you sit in the House, you can probably tell me, what the Parliament designs to do. Are we to have *no Relief*? Are we to see *no End* of our Miseries? If you have any good News to send to me, for God's sake, do it quickly, to prevent me, and my poor Family, from going quite distracted

There is still one Thing left, in which is my *last Hopes*, and my *only Dependance*, I have the Reversion of an Estate of Three hundred a Year, after the Death of an Uncle, who is now turn'd of Eighty. If it should happen to fall to me, pray let me know whether this Estate must also go to my merciless Creditors, whether I *break in upon their Property*, as they affirm, if I do not make it over to them; or whether I may *honestly* keep this small Maintenance, for the Support of myself, and my unhappy Family.

I am,

Dear SIR, Yours, &c.

P O S T S C R I P T.

I hope, you will pardon any Expressions in this Letter, that may look a little like Distraction, from a Man that has not been in Bed these three Months.

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